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ABSTRACT

Noting that a review of communication competence literature focusing on instructional practice reveals an absence of attempts to apply this research to instruction in higher education, this paper provides a synthesis of the research and discusses its implications for instructional goals and practices in higher education. It presents a review of the current perspectives of communication competence, notes their strengths and weaknesses, and offers a reconceptualization. The reconceptualization suggests that the primary focus of instruction should be not on how students communicate but on how they think about and respond to their communication. The paper concludes that communication instruction that focuses on developing specific outcome behaviors prepares students for effective functioning in a static world while instruction that focuses on developing communication competence prepares students for effective functioning in a changing world. (FL)

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COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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"Go back to the basics" and "demonstrate accountability" are mandates with which few educators are unfamiliar, regardless of their discipline or institutional level. While the effect of these mandates has varied from one discipline to another, within the communication discipline, the effect can be seen in the increasing focus on the issue of communication competence. A cursory examination of the communication literature over the past ten years reveals the rapid growth in both the quality and quantity of research concerning this issue. A more detailed examination of the "competence" literature reveals the three related, but different, focuses this research tends to take. One focus concerns the nature of communication competence and includes theoretical and empirical attempts to develop, or contribute to, a unified theory of communication competence. A second focus concerns the identification of specific skills or competencies requisite to communication competence. The third focus includes attempts to articulate this research into instructional practice.

An examination of research which focuses on instructional practice reveals an absence of attempts to apply this research to instruction in higher education. Thus, the purpose of this paper is twofold: (1) to provide a synthesis of the research concerning communication competence and (2) to discuss the implications of this research for instructional goals and practices in higher education.

Defining Communication Competence

Despite the strong similarities in the many definitions of communication competence, a close examination of these definitions reveals subtle differences. None-the-less, these differences can have a profound effect upon how we study communication competence and, thus, upon how we design instruction aimed at developing communication competence.

Rather than list the many definitions of communication competence, I believe it may be more appropriate to discuss the major issues which seem to account for some of the divergent perspectives. Specifically, these issues include: (1) the cognitive vs. the behavioral nature of competence, (2) the contextual nature of competence, (3) the relationship between effectiveness and competence, and (4) the developmental nature of communication competence.

Knowledge vs. Behavior

Backlund and Weimann (1978) provide an excellent discussion of this issue in which they review several definitions conceptualizing communication competence as a mental ability distinct from behavior. They also list a number of definitions which, while not excluding the cognitive dimension, place emphasis on the performance of communication behaviors. In concluding their review, Backlund and Weiman state that ". . . any conceptualization of competence must include both behavioral and nonbehavioral dimensions, and include all the critical factors that influence communicative behavior (p. 7)."

This emphasis on both the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of competence is reinforced by Harris (1979) in her argument for a systemic model of communication competence, a model based upon Pearce's (1976) theory of the Coordinated Management of Meaning. The importance of both dimensions is also implicit in Fogel's (1979) definition of communication competence as "the ability of an individual to alter his or her communication behaviors in order to affect another's attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs (p. 15)." Thus, the general consensus is that communication competence consists of both cognitive knowledge and performance ability.

Before moving on to the second issue, however, attention must be given to a third dimension of communication competence which has yet to be clearly articulated. What appears to be implicit in many of the definitions reviewed by Backlund and Weiman, but which is never explicitly identified, is the affective dimension of communication competence. On the basis of logic alone, a strong

case can be made for communication competence to include not only knowledge of how to perform and ability to perform, but also a willingness to perform. "Knowing that" and "knowing how" is one matter; actually exhibiting what one knows is another. This point is well illustrated in an example provided by Darnell (1978). If our concern, in a particular teaching-learning transaction, is only with knowledge and behavior, we may find that, as an outcome of the transaction, "a person learned how to make a persuasive speech when called upon to do so but also learned to avoid situations which might call for such behavior (p. 278)." Consider also the student who knows how to "encourage members of a group" or "resolve conflict," but chooses not to do so.

Thus, any viable conceptualization of communication competence must explicitly deal with not only the cognitive and behavioral dimensions, but also the affective. The significance of this third dimension will be developed in more detail later in this paper.

The Contextual Nature

The role of context is clearly expressed by Larson and others (1978), who define communication competence as "the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the communication behaviors socially appropriate in a given situation (p. 24)." In fact, there are few definitions of communication competence which do not explicitly emphasize the importance of context.

In terms of the question raised earlier concerning the specific knowledge, performance, and attitudinal characteristics of communication competence, the issue of context has some important implications. Specifically, communication competence demands not only knowledge of specific communication behaviors, but also knowledge of the contexts of situations in which the specific behaviors should be exhibited. As Wieman (1978) explains, "The competent communicator knows the cultural rules (but does not blindly or unimaginatively obey them) and uses those rules as resources to bring off the encounter in a mutually satisfying manner (p. 315)."

Because of its importance to any conceptualization of communication competence, the issue of context introduces a crucial problem. This problem concerns the identification of the specific behaviors appropriate to (conforming to the social rules of) a given context. Considering the quality and quantity of variables operating within a given context--time, place, participants, topic, goal, preceeding events, etc.,--there appears little potential for identifying specific behaviors relevant to all contexts.

While there is little possibility of identifying a complete list of the specific skills requisite to communication competence, current research does suggest the potential for specifying a general set of skills that a person must have if he or she is to be able to function effectively in most contexts. Two of the more noted efforts in this area include those of Allen and Brown (1976) and Wiemann (1977a). In their report of the Speech Communication Association's National Project on Speech Communication Competencies, Allen and Brown propose five dimensions of competence: (1) controlling, (2) feeling, (3) informing, (4) ritualizing, and (5) imagining. Their rationale for this taxonomy is based upon the belief that it identifies "five large families of communication functions which embrace. . . .the dominant uses of communication in contemporary life (p. 251)."

In a review of a number of research efforts to identify the dimensions of communication competence, efforts which generally do not take the developmental perspective of Allen and Brown, Weimann found strong agreement on several dimensions. The dimensions identified most frequently include: (1) empathy, (2) behavioral flexibility--the ability to adapt to the context, and (3) interaction management--the ability to meet the procedural requirements of a conversation. However, despite the promise of this research, the concept of communication competence "is not sufficiently developed to provide prescriptive information about which specific behaviors constitute appropriate action in a general set of contexts (Wiemann, p. 314)."

Effectiveness vs. Competence

While there appears to be general concensus that appropriateness is directly related to competence, the relationship between competence and effectiveness is not so clear. Some conceptualizations state quite explicitly that effectiveness is a fundamental criterion to competence. Others are much less explicit about the role of effectiveness. Still others, view the concepts as quite distinct, having little relationship.

Weinstein (1969), Bochner and Kelly (1974) and Heath (1977) suggest only a general link between effectiveness and competence, but others are much more specific. Weimann (1977), for example, defines communication competence as the ability of an interactant to accomplish goals "while maintaining the face and line of his fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation (p. 198)." Fogel (1979) expresses an even stronger link between effectiveness and communication competence by defining the latter as the ability "to affect another's attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs (p. 15)."

Many other researchers are much less explicit about the relationship between effectiveness and communication competence. Allen and Brown (1976) for example, view communication competence as "an awareness of the transactions that occur between people (p. 248)." While this perspective ties competence "to the actual performance of language in social contexts (p. 248)," nowhere in the explication of the four principal features of competence is it clearly tied to effectiveness. Similarly, Harris (1979) is less specific about the role of effectiveness in her definition of interpersonal competence as "the ability to create and coordinate interpersonal systems (p. 32)."

Backlund (1977), viewing appropriateness as the fundamental criterion for competence, sees this criterion as that which separates communication competence from communication effectiveness. In other words, to the degree that effectiveness implies achievement of a goal, and, to the degree that a person can achieve a goal in an inappropriate manner or can exhibit appropriate behavior and

not achieve the goal, effectiveness is clearly not requisite to competence. Certain that the concepts are not completely unrelated, Backlund (1978) suggests that "communication competence may facilitate goal attainment, but the outcome of competence is the judgment of appropriateness. Communication competence is a more basic concept, a concept of social interaction, while effectiveness implies attainment of goals or satisfaction of needs (p. 20)."

Despite the different emphases which various definitions place on effectiveness, it has a role in the understanding of communication competence. The precise nature of that role will be pursued at a later point in this paper.

The Developmental Nature of Competence

Implicit, if not explicit, in most discussions of communication competence is its developmental nature. As Brown (1975) explains, "learning to communicate involves development of language codes and affective behaviors and the shaping of codes and behaviors into roles and norms that fit the expectations of society (p. 65)." While communication development has received the attention of researchers from a variety of disciplines, perhaps the most comprehensive effort was that taken by the SCA National Project on Speech Communication Competencies. While the focus of this project, as with most related research, was on pre-K through adolesence, it is clearly implied that communication development continues into adulthood. As Wood (1977a) explains, "the difference in age is not in the presence or absence of these functional abilities, but in the levels of sophistication with which they employ communication acts (p. 8)." The implications of this issue, especially for higher education, will be explored in the next section of this paper.

In summary, an examination of various definitions of communication competence reveals wide concensus on the conceptualization of competence as an ability to adapt to the communication context--an ability consisting of cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions, an ability which develops over time. However, whether it is an ability to demonstrate communication behavior which is socially appropriate

to, (does not violate the rules of) the context, or an ability to demonstrate behavior which is effective (accomplishes the goals of the source) is an issue about which there is less consensus. Similarly, while there is some consensus concerning a few general skills which comprise this ability, there is virtually no agreement concerning the specific cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills which comprise it. Thus, despite the few areas of agreement, it is clear that we have yet to answer the question of what communication competence is and what it consists of. I suggest that our inability to answer these questions is the result of an inappropriate assumption about competence generally.

A Reconceptualization of Communication Competence

Regardless of how diverse the conceptualizations of communication competence are, an assumption which appears to be consistent among most of them is that competence is product bound. In other words, whether a definition focuses on effectiveness or appropriateness as a fundamental criterion, the assumption is that to be competent is to not fail. As a corollary, if the communicator does not accomplish his or her goal, or if his or her behavior is socially inappropriate, communication competence has not been displayed.

Thus, the task and long range goal of most competence research has been to identify those behaviors which are requisit to effectiveness, appropriateness, or both. This focus on identifiable behaviors is also motivated by the assumption that if we can identify the skills which a communicator needs to effectively accomplish goals or communicate in a socially appropriate manner, we will then be able to develop instruments for measuring competence and develop instructional programs for developing competence.

Despite the attractiveness of these goals, they appear to be leading us into a paradox, asserting on the one hand, that competence is context bound and on the other, that competence can be developed. In other words, given the diversity of contexts which an individual confronts within a lifetime, it is unrealistic to

assume that we can both identify the behaviors requisite to appropriate/effective communication in all of these contexts, and equip the individual with knowledge of all behaviors relevant to each context.

As a means of removing ourselves from this conceptual quagmire, I suggest that any conceptualization of communication competence first begin with a clear picture of competence in general. Of the various ways of viewing competence, that presented by Connolly and Bruner (1973) is widely accepted. Like Sheffler (1965) and others, Connolly and Bruner distinguish between "knowing how" and "knowing that" and assert that competence implies action, where the individual changes the environment as well as adapts to it. In addition, they suggest competence is characterized by at least three abilities:

> First, being able to select features from the total environment that provide the relevant information for elaborating a course of action. . . . Secondly, having planned a course of action, the next task is to initiate the sequence of movements, or activities, in order to achieve the objective we have set for ourselves. And finally, we must utilize what we have learned from our successes and failures in the formulation of new plans (p. 3).

Of these three abilities, Connolly and Bruner advocate that it is the third, the ability to evaluate one's behavior and use the experience as a basis for future plans and behaviors, which is most central to the development of competence.

Thus, the competent person is not the person who merely selects and effectively implements the appropriate plan. In fact, whether the plan is or is not appropriate or is or is not effectively implemented is unimportant. What is important is what the individual does after the experience. That which most distinguishes the competent from the incompetent is the affective skill of "valuing" evaluation and the cognitive skills necessary to conduct an evaluation which will enable one to learn from the experience.

Of all the conceptualizations of communication competence, that which came out of the SCA National Project on Speech Communication Competencies most closely resembles Connolly and Bruner's definition of competence. In their report on the National Project, Allen and Brown (1976) present a much broader view of

communication competence than most others and define it in terms of four principle features: (1) the availability of a wide repertoire of experiences and strategies, (2) the ability to select the appropriate strategy from the repertoire, (3) the ability and willingness to implement the strategy through use of verbal and nonverbal behaviors; and (4) the ability to evaluate the performance of behaviors objectively . . . "thereby enriching their repertoires of experiences (p. 248)."

Inherent in this perspective is behavioral flexibility as a characteristic and growth as an outcome. In other words, a competent communicator is one who is capable of selecting from a wide range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors those which he or she perceives to be most appropriate for the specific situation and time. He or she must also be capable of making judgments about (evaluating) that behavior "in terms of its appropriateness to the communication context and its interpersonal effectiveness--satisfaction" to him or herself and others, judgments which "contribute to the repertoire of experiences that provide the broad base for future communication encounters (p. 249)."

While this perspective of communication competence appears similar to most others presented in the literature, a close examination reveals two major differences. First, it does not attempt to define what communication competence is as much as to define the essentials of the development of communication competence. Second, unlike most other perspectives, it emphasizes the role of evaluation and its corresponding affective and cognitive dimensions in the expression of communication competence. Consistent with the perspective of Connolly and Bruner, what Allen and Brown view as most characteristic of communication competence is not how one communicates, but how one approaches that communication.

As a means of clarifying some of the issues and inconsistencies inherent in the competence literature, I suggest we need to recognize that communication competence can be conceptualized on at least three different levels. Specifically,

we need to distinguish between communication competencies, competent communication, and communication competence. These distinctions help to describe the complexity of communication competence.

Communication Competencies

At the lowest level, our concern is with the general types of skills and knowledge the individual must possess in order to function competently in various contexts. For example, our focus may be on such general functional abilities as controlling, feeling, informing, ritualizing, and imagining (Allen & Brown, 1976), each potentially appropriate to any context. At the same time, we may focus on such interaction skills as role taking and interaction management (Wiemann, 1977a), abilities most relevant to interpersonal contexts. In addition, our concern may be with more basic competenices, expressed in terms of the ability to "distinguish facts from opinion," the ability to "express and defend with evidence your point of view," or the ability to "express feelings to others" (Bassett, Whittington & Staton-Spicer, 1978). While it is obvious that possession of some skills is a necessary condition for communication competence, it is not sufficient to ensure competence.

Competent Communication

On another level, our concern is with communication behavior which is appropriate for, and effective within, a given context. Competent communication is similar to that which Larson (1978) labels as functional communication and Wiemann (1977) refers to as interpersonal competence. The focus here is not on the skills needed to exhibit the behavior, but the actual behavior and its effect. It is competence at this level which most current definitions seem to be addressing. As is discussed in the following, whether a communication behavior, or set of behaviors exhibited within a specific context, is or is not competent or functional has little bearing on communication competence.

Communication Competence

The highest level, communication competence, is that with which Allen and Brown are most concerned. In terms of Connolly and Bruner's conceptualization of competence and Allen and Brown's conceptualization of communication competence, at this level our focus is on (1) the ability of the individual to use the communication competencies at his or her disposal in exhibiting the most appropriate and effective communication behavior (competent communication) and (2) the ability of the individual to learn from his or her communication encounters in such a way as to expand his or her ability to meet future communication encounters. Whether or not the individual possesses the necessary competencies for the situation and whether or not he or she accomplishes the goal has little bearing upon the communication competence of that individual. What does have a bearing is whether or not the individual selects what he or she perceives to be the most appropriate behavior and implements the behavior as effectively/appropriately as he or she is capable. Of equal, if not greater importance, is whether or not the individual conducts a thorough and objective evaluation of his or her behavior in an attempt to learn form the experience.

In light of the foregoing, communication competence can be defined as the willingness to both select and implement those verbal and nonverbal behaviors, within the available repertoire, perceived to be the most appropriate to the situation and to objectively evaluate both the appropriateness and effectiveness of the behaviors for purposes of further expanding the repertoire.

Implications for Communication Instruction

The foregoing conceptualization of communication competence has a number of implications for communication instruction. The most important implication concerns the primary goal of instruction at all levels. Specifically, it suggests that the most important goal is to help the learner develop a specific set of affective and cognitive skills. In terms of Bloom's taxonomy (Krathwhol, Bloom & Masia, 1964) the focus must be on such skills as "willingness to receive,"

"willingness to respond," "acceptance of a value," "commitment," etc. In other words, we must help the student learn to place a high value on communication generally and communication strategizing specifically. The student must also learn to place a high value on such intellectual skills as "comprehension," "application," "analysis," "synthesis," and "evaluation." At the same time, our goal is to go beyond developing the learner's repertoire of "knowledge" (communication facts, principles, theories, etc.) and specific behaviors. Specifically, our goal must be to develop within the learner such cognitive skills as "analyzing," "synthesizing," "applying," and "evaluating," skills which the learner needs in order to go beyond the repertoire we can provide and to expand his or her own repertoire.

On the lowest level, we must supplement and expand the learner's knowledge of communication specifics, terminology, conventions, principles, theories, etc., the specifics of which communication competence is comprised. On another level, we must develop or expand the learner's ability to comprehend that which is received, to analyze and synthesize knowledge of communication in preparing for future communication problems (encounters) or in meeting current communication problems, and to apply the results of the analysis and synthesis by implementing that which he or she perceives to be appropriate and necessary. On a third level, we must develop and/or expand the learner's ability to apply both his or her knowledge of communication and skill in analyzing and synthesizing by evaluating past communication encounters for purposes of acquiring new knowledge.

Thus, the primary goal of communication instruction, at all levels, is to develop communication competence as defined. However, the secondary goal of communication instruction--to develop specific communication competencies--depends upon the level of instruction and the learner's level of development. While the exact nature of these competencies may be unclear, guidelines are beginning to emerge from some of the more recent research.

One of the more significant contributions was that made by the SCA National Project noted earlier. While the Project participants did not identify specific competencies which elementary and secondary communication instruction should be focusing upon, they did identify five categories of communication acts or functions around which communication instruction should be organized: controlling, feeling, informing, ritualizing, and imagining (Allen & Brown, 1976). A more recent study by Ritti (1978) supports the validity of this taxonomy. For the reader concerned with instruction on the elementary or secondary level, Wood (1977 & 1977a), Allen and Wood (1978), Hopper and Wrather (1978) and Book (1978) provide excellent discussions illustrating the application of the communication functions approach.

Another attempt to identify specific competencies was that of the task force established by the SCA Educational Policies Board to identify minimal speaking and listening competencies for high school graduates. In the report of the Task Force, Bassett, Whittington, and Staton-Spicer (1978) list nineteen competencies which their research suggests as appropriate guidelines for the development of curricula in speaking and listening. Thus, there is at least some basis for identifying the specific competencies which should be the focus of communication instruction.

In addition to the primary and secondary goals of communication instruction, the definition of communication competence suggested in this paper also has implications for the nature of that instruction. Specifically, the instruction should be experientially based. If a student is to learn how to make choices, implement those choices, and evaluate his or her choices, he or she must be given frequent opportunities to do so in a variety of contexts. As Wood (1977a) explains, "students should be given an opportunity to talk <u>about</u> their talk. They should be encouraged to identify, analyze, and modify criteria for <u>selecting</u> communication acts. They should have the opportunity to discuss their verbal and nonverbal choices in <u>implementing</u> strategies. They should be given the opportunity to participate in <u>evaluating</u> their own communication behavior and the communication

behavior of others (p. 9-10)." It is through this give-and-take process that the student learns both new strategies and criteria for selecting and implementing them, and how to evaluate his or her communication behavior in a manner that maximizes growth and the acquisition of a wider repertoire of competence (Darnell, 1978).

Given this need for an experiential approach to instruction, the question remaining concerns the design of the instruction. While there is little evidence to clearly support any one approach, the model suggested by the SCA National Project appears quite appropriate. This instructional model, which is outlined and illustrated in Wood (1977 & 1977a), Hooper and Wrather (1978) and Book (1978), not only appears appropriate for developing specific communication competencies, but also appears to be the most appropriate model for developing communication competence as defined in this paper. A detailed explanation of this model will be provided in the remaining section which focuses on communication instruction in higher education.

Implications for Communication Instruction in Higher Education

While the perspective of communication competence taken in this paper has implications for students at all levels of communication instruction in higher education, I shall limit my discussion to that level at which we encounter the largest number of students, the basic course. This is also the level at which the task is perhaps the most complex. Given the developmental nature of communication competence, regardless of how the construct is defined, it is clear that all of the students entering the basic course do so with some level of communication competence and a number of communication competencies. In terms of the communication functions, all students have some level of competence in controlling, feeling, informing, ritualizing, and imagining. Similarly, in terms of the minimal competencies outlined by Bassett, Whittington, and Staton-Spicer (1978), all students have some level of competence to "listen effectively to spoken English,"

"express ideas clearly and concisely," "express feelings to others," etc. However, due to the lack of uniformity in elementary and secondary communication instruction, the specific competencies which they possess and their general level of competence, vary considerably. Despite this variability, we are expected to provide sufficient instruction to enable all basic course students to function as effective communicators in the pursuit of their chosen careers.

It is precisely these expectations and constraints which dictate that the goal of our instruction should be the continued development of communication competence first, and communication competencies second. In other words, given the quantity and quality of competencies which these students may need to function effectively in the pursuit of their diverse careers and our limitations in time and resources, our primary goal must be to insure that they possess the affective and cognitive skills necessary to effectively evaluate and learn from their communication experiences. At the same time, our secondary goal is to develop and/or enhance those competencies or skills deemed essential to professional workers generally. Our corresponding task therefore, is to develop an instructional system which will provide as much opportunity as possible for the student to engage in communication experiences and to evaluate them. A more detailed discussion of these three issues--communication competencies, communication competence, and instructional practices--follows.

Communication Competencies

Again, due to the diversity of the students who enroll in the basic course and the corresponding diversity in their prospective career choices, identifying the specific competencies upon which to base instruction becomes a difficult task. It is precisely because of this diversity that many communication departments are beginning to provide a variety of basic courses designed for specific student populations. There are courses in business and professional communication for business majors, instructional communication for education majors, and health

communication for nurses and other health professionals. Where this is the case, the task of identifying specific competencies upon which to base instruction becomes less difficult. While there is clearly no consensus concerning the specific competencies needed for any of these career areas, literature is available upon which decisions can be based. One can look at such reports as that of DiSalvo, Larsen and Seiler (1976), and Crocker (1979) for competencies identified as important to business professionals; Kay (1975) and Lynn (1976) for teaching competencies; and Adler (1977) and Morse and Piland (1979) for health communication competencies. However, if the course is available to students pursuing many different careers, which applies to most basic courses, the decision concerning which competencies to focus on is a difficult one.

Regardless, given the variable of context, it is unrealistic to believe that any one course or series of courses, can equip the student with all the competencies needed, and the ability to select and implement them in a manner which is always appropriate and effective. However, it appears quite feasible and appropriate to develop the student's ability to evaluate and learn from his or her communication experiences, i.e., to enhance his or her communication competence.

Communication Competence

Just as students entering the basic communication courses are diverse in their possession of specific competencies, so are they diverse in their possession of communication competence. To adapt a paradigm of competence suggested by Heun and Heun (1978), some students can be classified as unconscious uncompetents. These are the students who possess a very narrow repertoire of communication behaviors--little knowledge of criteria upon which to base the selection of their behaviors, limited ability to implement even those behaviors within their repertoire, and very little ability or willingness to evaluate their communication objectively. The number of students in this category is probably small. These are the students who have yet to meet the fate described by Larson (1978) of

being "'weeded out,' institutionalized, separated and managed differently (p. 307-308)," but who will probably meet this fate early in their college careers. These may be the students who find it extremely difficult to adapt to dormitory living and who are never seen again after they are absent from the first speech assignment or class report. In short, these are the students who gain little satisfaction from communication in all but a few dyadic situations and have little or no understanding of how to make it different.

A second type of student is the unconscious competent. This is the student who is fairly adept in communication in most communication contexts, but has little understanding why. This student is the one who can present an acceptable speech, but can not explain why it was acceptable, or, who has learned how to express empathy without really knowing it. In other words, the student in this category is the one who has learned to play the game well without really understanding the game and thus, has little potential for enhancing his competence in playing the game (Conville, 1977).

A third category is the student who may be classified as the conscious uncompetent. Here, we are describing the student who possesses the cognitive and behvioral skills but lacks the affective skills requisite to competence. This is the type of student who knows how to express and defend his or her point of view with evidence, knows that evidence is needed in a particular situation, but chooses not to use any.

The last category of student is the conscious competent. This is the student who has a wider repertoire of communication strategies than most other students, who is highly adept at selecting the appropriate strategy for the situation at hand, and who is quite willing to carry that strategy into action. However, what most distinguishes this student from all others is the ability and desire to critically analyze and learn from his or her communication successes and failures.

In reality, no individual clearly fits into any one category. Rather, all individuals may find themselves in each of these categories at one time or another, depending upon the context. What is most important about these hypothetical categories, however, is their implication for the primary goal of communication instruction in higher education. Specifically, our goal is not to develop the ability to be successful in all encounters. Rather, the goal should be to develop the desire to be successful in an encounter, the ability to recognize when an encounter has or has not been successful, and the desire and ability to learn from the encounter. The remaining issue is the instructional process needed to accomplish this goal.

An Instructional Model

The instructional model I suggest as most appropriate for developing communication competence is the model outlined by the SCA National Project referred to earlier in this paper. Examples of this instructional approach are provided in Appendix A. Despite the similarity in the format of these activities to the format many of us currently use, there are some significant differences. What is most significant about these activities, or any activity designed to develop communication competence as conceptualized, is the focus on each of the four aspects of competence, especially evaluation. This focus is provided in the "Questions/ Follow-up" portion of the activity and the kinds of questions it provides. The reader will note that each activity is designed to expand the students' (1) repertoire of communication experiences and strategies, (2) ability to select strategies appropriate to the situation, (3) ability to implement their choices of strategy, and (4) ability to evaluate communication behavior.

One of the primary goals of this instructional approach is to motivate students to think about their communication, i.e., to examine their repertoire, to select and implement from the repertoire that which they perceive as most appropriate, and to evaluate their behavior. However, that the students evaluate

their communication behavior is not as important as how they evaluate. Evaluating effectively means asking the right questions. These are questions which focus on the behaviors which were exhibited, the criteria upon which the behaviors were selected, and the actual implementation of the verbal and nonverbal behavior. Thus, the questions and ideas provided in the "Questions/Follow-up" section of each activity focus on one or more of the aspects of competence: repertoire (R), selection (S), implementation (I), and evaluation (E). A more detailed explanation of each of these aspects of competence is provided in Appendix B.

In reference to the content of the activities around which instruction should be designed, the conceptualization of communication competence presented in this paper suggests that most ideas for activities should come directly from the lives of our students. While many of the activities should focus on skills or competencies of current relevance to the students, many should also focus on skills or competencies which will have relevance in the future. For example, an activity designed to expand the students' competence in using visual aids will have relevance for both the current and future communication needs of the students. However, if the "Questions/Follow-up" of the activity focus only on the use of visuals in the context experienced, the college classroom, the potential for the acitivity to prepare the students for future contexts may be extremely limited. Thus, to maximize the value of the activity, the "Questions/Follow-up" must also focus on the students' use of visuals in contexts which they may face in the future, contexts where expectations may be higher and resources less limited. Regardless of the content, an activity must further develop the student's communication competence. To help teachers design activities which meet these requirements, the "guidelines" outlined in Appendix C are provided.

CONCLUSION

As communication educators, we have an ethical responsiblity to develop within each of our students as high a level of communication competence as

possible. However, this responsibility can be met only when we understand what communication competence is and how it can best be developed. With this need in mind, this paper has reviewed the current perspectives of communication competence, noted their strengths and weaknesses, and offered a reconceptualization. This reconceptualization suggests that the primary focus of our instruction should not be on how our students communicate, but on how they think about, and respond to, their communication. Communication instruction which focuses on developing specific outcome behaviors prepares students for effective functioning in a static world. Communication instruction which focuses on developing communication competence prepares students for effective functioning in a changing world.

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APPENDIX A

DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

Primary Function: Informing

Objectives: Gaining audience understanding of an issue, process, object, etc., through the use of visual aids.

Materials: Outline which explains the objectives and requirements of the activity.

Procedures: Assign each student to prepare and present a short (3-5 minute) presentation with the goal of increasing the audience's understanding of an issue, process, object, etc., primarily through the use of visual aids. The nature of the topic may be defined by the instructor or left open to the student. For example, all students may be required to inform the class about a process ("How to build a planter.", "How to change a faucet washer."), an issue ("The unsanitary conditions existing in the cafeteria.", "The advantages of air bags in automobiles."), or an object ("How to use a food processor.", "How to use an 8mm movie camera."). The students must be required to use one or more types of visual aids as the main vehicle for gaining understanding (e.g., models, pictures, drawing, charts, slides, etc.). Have five or six students present their messages and use the remaining time for discussion.

Questions/Follow-up: The focus of the discussion should include the following:

1. What types of visual aids were employed? (R)
2. Identify all examples illustrating the effective use of the visual aid(s). (E,S) Why was each effective? (E)
3. Identify all examples of visuals which were not used effectively or which could have been used more effectively. (E,S) Why was each ineffective? (E) How could the speaker have used it more effectively? (R,I)
4. Are there any instances where a visual, other than the one used, could have been equally effective? (R,S) Why would it be equally as effective? (E)

In addition, discussion could include other skills related to informing. For example:

1. Identify the various techniques used in the introductions and conclusions. (R)
2. Which introductions/conclusions were functional (effective)? (E,S) Why were they effective? (E)
3. Which introduction/conclusions were ineffective? (E,S) Why was each ineffective? (E) How could the speaker have made the conclusion/introduction more effective? (R,S,I)

Repertoire (R), Selection (S), Implementation (I), Evaluation (E)

THE INTERVIEW

Primary Function: Informing

Secondary Function: Controlling, Ritualizing

Objectives: Performing and evaluating questioning behavior in the information interview.

Procedures: Appoint one or more dyads from the class. Give the dyad(s) 5-10 minutes to prepare for an in-class interview in which one member will conduct an interview with the other member in an area of his or her expertise. Have each dyad conduct the interview with the rest of the class observing.

Discussion/Follow-up:

1. Did the interviewer effectively open the interview? (E) Which behaviors were appropriate for opening the interview? (R,E) If any behaviors were inappropriate, what behaviors would have been more appropriate? (R,S,E) Why? (E)
2. Which of the following types of questions were not used effectively or could have been used more effectively? a. open, b. closed, c. primary, d. secondary, e. neutral vs. directed (E) How could they have been used more effectively? (R,S,I)
3. Did the interviewer effectively close the interview? (E) If not, what behaviors would have been more appropriate? (R,S)

Repertoire (R), Selection (S), Implementation (I), Evaluation (E)

PREVENTING AND RESOLVING CONFLICT

Primary Function: Controlling

Secondary Function: Feeling

Objectives" To identify methods for preventing and resolving conflict.

Materials: Copies of "The Case of Harold Samms, Student" (attached)

Procedures: Distribute the case to each student with instructions to read the case and select one of the seven alternatives on the back. They are not to discuss the case or their selection with other students at this time.

Select a group of five to seven students. Explain that the instructor decided to defer the decision on Harold Samm's case to a student committee, that they are the committee, and that they have twenty-five minutes to reach a consensus on one of the seven alternatives listed.

Prior to giving the foregoing directions, select at least one student in the group and secretly inform the student to select and defend alternative "six" or "seven" in an attempt to engender conflict. Perhaps the best approach is to select the confederate student prior to the class session and instruct him/her on the role.

Have the group move to the center of the room for their discussion, with the remaining students observing. End the discussion at the peak of the conflict and discuss the following:

Discussion/Follow-up:

1. What methods or strategies might be used to prevent conflict? (R) which would have been appropriate in this situation? (S,E)
2. Illustrate what one of the members of the group might have said or done to prevent conflict. (R,I)
3. What strategies might be used to resolve conflict? (R) Which would be appropriate for this situation? (S,E)
4. Illustrate what one of the members of this group might say or do to resolve the conflict. (R,I)

Repertoire (R), Selection (S), Implementation (I), Evaluation (E)

The Case of Harold Samms, Student*

Harold Samms is a senior in his last term and expects to graduate. He needs to pass every course this term in order to graduate. Harold is a member of a class in small group discussion. The work in this calss required that he attend all of the meetings of the class and prepare several papers and reports. Among them were the following: A journal of the activities of the laboratory periods where the class was involved in discussion of various topics; reports of his outside reading; a term paper on a subject of his choice; and a final open book examination which was to make an analysis of the various elements of leadership, problem solving, decision making, communication, etc., that developed over the term in the discussion laboratory.

Harold attended most of the class sessions and seemed to be a leader in the various discussions. His contributions were usually effective, and he performed with some skill in the various functions of discussion. He actually only missed two sessions during the term.

At the end of the term when the various papers were due, Harold handed in his journal and a term paper but no reading notes and no final exam. The journal and the term paper were above average work, and he received a B on each. For the final, however, Harold handed in a 15 page, single-space typewritten document in which he tried to justify why he should not write the examination. (Most examination papers ran about 10 pages.) The essence of his argument was that he felt the examination was not worthy of the time spent on it, was too detailed to be of any basic value, and that he had a right to refuse to do the examination on the grounds of his participation in the class which should be sufficient for a grade.

You are the teacher in this class. Which of the following atlernatives would you select as a proper action to take in Harold's case?

Select Only One Alternative

____ 1. Accept Harold's paper as an honest statement and count it in lieu of his regular examination.

____ 2. Call Harold in for a conference and ask him to discuss his concepts of the examination as a kind of oral examination. Give him his grade on that.

____ 3. Give Harold an Incomplete in the course until he submits the exam as requested.

____ 4. Allow Harold to withdraw from the course so that his record will not show any negative factor.

____ 5. Give Harold an Incomplete in the course with 30 days in which to complete the work. If at the end of 30 days he has not completed the final satisfactorily, he will receive a failing mark.

____ 6. Give Harold a D grade and let it go at that.

____ 7. Give Harold an F with no conditions attached.

*From Keltner, John W. Instructor's Manual for Interpersonal Speech Communication. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1970, p. 65-66.

FIND AND REMOVE THE BARRIER

Primary Function: Controlling

Secondary Functions: Informing, Feeling

Objective: Recognizing communication barriers (messages, responses, stimuli, etc., which inhibit effective communication) and selecting communication skills or strategies for enhancing communication.

Materials: Using materials similar to Chs. 3 and 5 of Verdeber's Communicate! (1978), develop a list of common barriers and corresponding skills for use by the students (see attached). Prepare a case study similar to "The Case of Anne Simms" (attached).

Procedures: Distribute and discuss the list of barriers and skills, or discuss those presented in your text. Distribute the case study. Divide the class into groups of 5-7 students each and give them 15-20 minutes to discuss the case study with the task of (1) identifying as many communication barriers as they can and (2) selecting skills appropriate for either preventing or overcoming each barrier. You may elect to have the students do an individual analysis either in or outside of class.

Questions/Follow-up:

1. What barriers did you perceive to be operating in the situation depicted in the case study? (E) How did these barriers inhibit effective communication? (E)
2. What strategies or skills were needed to prevent these barriers? (S,R)
3. What strategies or skills could have been used to overcome the barriers? (S,R)
4. Select students to role play portions of the case study illustrating how they would prevent or overcome the barriers. (S,I) Did the students select and implement the appropriate, or most appropriate, skills? (E)

Repertoire (R), Selection (S), Implementation (I), Evaluation (E)

Given a case study of a communication problem, identify and describe the barriers to effective communication and describe strategies for avoiding or overcoming the barriers.

Analyzing the Situation: In analyzing the situation, you will want to do the following:

First, you should refer to the place in the case study where each barrier occurred.

Second, you should accurately name the barrier you identified. For the most part, the barrier should be the same as or similar to those discussed in the reading material and summarized below:

1. Selective perception
2. Confusing facts and inferences
3. Transfer stations
4. Information overload
5. Noise
6. A gap
7. A hidden agenda
8. Defensiveness
9. Suspicion
10. Irrelevant response
11. An interrupting response
12. A tangential response
13. An incongruous response
14. An evaluative response
15. Conflict
16. Overreaction

Remember that these categories of barriers are not mutually exclusive.

Third, you should accurately explain how the named barrier is applicable to the situation you have identified.

Describing the Strategies for Avoiding the Problem: You should accurately describe strategies for avoiding or overcoming each barrier identified. For the most part, the strategy should be the same as or similar to one of the following sending or receiving skills:

1. Listening
2. Paraphrasing
3. Use of supportive statements
4. Questioning
5. Interpreting
6. Use of personal feedback
7. Separating fact from inference
8. Dating
9. Indexing
10. Using specific and concrete symbols
11. Describing feelings

THE CASE OF ANNE SIMMS

Ann Simms, thirty eight, had worked for the Bong Co., Inc. for fifteen years. For the last ten years she had served as a sales representative, accepting customer orders by phone. For several years Ann had aspired to a position of "field representative," a position which brought considerably more status and income. Harvey Haney, the sales manager, had assured Ann that, as senior sales representative, she would be given top consideration for the next available field representative position.

When Ann learned that Cecil Johnson, one of the field representatives, would be retiring in another six months, it appeared that her promotion was near. However, it had not occurred to Haney to reassure Ann the position was to be hers. Moreover, since Ann felt her superior should take the initiative, she did not seek reassurance from Haney.

As time passed, Ann became more and more uneasy. About two weeks prior to Johnson's retirement, Ann was shaken by the sight of Johnson escorting another man into Haney's office. Despite the closed door, Ann could hear the men laughing and joking inside. The three men finally came out of the office after more than an hour. As they were leaving, Haney shook hands with the new man, saying, "Bob, I'm sure you're going to get a good start at the business and am looking forward to working with you." As Johnson and the new man left, Haney returned to his office. Ann was beside herself. It was obvious to her that the new man was being hired for Johnson's position and why Haney had never talked with her. She immediately cleaned out her desk and wrote a biting letter of resignation. After throwing the letter on Haney's desk, she angrily ran out of the office.

APPENDIX B

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

When people work to develop communication competence they are concerned with "putting language to work" for them in the following ways: (1) enlarging their repertoire of communication acts: (2) selecting criteria for making choices from the repertoire; (3) implementing the communication acts chosen; and (4) evaluating the effectiveness of communication employed.

REPERTOIRE OF COMMUNICATION ACTS

To be effective communicators individuals must be flexible actors. They must be able to perform a range of communication acts required by the conversation, the people, the setting, and the task-at-hand. Our repertoire goal is to expand the repertoire of communication acts which individuals can employ in communication situations.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Communication effectiveness is based on the appropriateness of what people say. The competent communicator carefully weighs the factors of the communication situation: (1) the participants--the people involved in communication; (2) setting--the time and place of the communication event; (3) topic--the subject matter of communication; and (4) task--the goal or purpose of communication. Our selection goal is to provide an opportunity for students to identify and sharpen the criteria they use in choosing communication acts.

IMPLEMENTING CHOICES

Once people have made communication choices for a particular situation, they must possess skills to carry their choices into action. If they have decided that a carefully phrased suggestion, coupled with several justifications, is appropriate for a sister who is in a real jam, they must be prepared to execute that communication plan. Our implementation goal is to offer students a variety of situations helpful in giving them practice in implementing their choice or choices of communication acts in situations.

EVALUATING COMMUNICATION

People must evaluate their communication in terms of its appropriateness to the communication context and its satisfaction to themselves and others. Judgments of message effectiveness use feedback from others as well as information from personal experiences. By evaluating each encounter in terms of appropriateness and satisfaction, we gain valuable information (criteria) for future conversations with others. The evaluation goal, then, is to provide opportunities for students to sharpen their critical awareness of self and others in moments of communication interaction ("Did my plan work?" "What would probably happen?" "How did the other person probably feel?").

While communication competence has four principal features--repertoire, selection, implementation, and evaluation--this does not mean that it has four steps in an ordered sequence. All aspects of competence are operative in every moment of communication. Rather, each of these four aspects provides a different focus for viewing the development of the student's communicative competence--that is, each focuses attention, pedagogically, on different kinds of instruction intervention.

APPENDIX C

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING ACTIVITIES

Below are the kinds of questions one should ask about an activity to be used for developing communication competence. The more all of the questions can be answered positively, the more effective should be the activity in developing the students' communication competence.

1. Repertoire

   Does the ACTIVITY provide an opportunity for the students to observe a range of communication behaviors (acts) relevant to the objective of the activity? (Within limits, the wider the range of relevant behaviors they can observe, the better.)

   Does the DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP help the students identify the behaviors (verbal and nonverbal) which were used to communicate the message and identify the behaviors which were not used but could have been?

2. Selection

   Does the ACTIVITY provide an opportunity for the students to select behaviors they judge as appropriate for the situation?

   Does the DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP help the students understand why the behaviors were selected and why other behaviors were not selected? That is, do the questions help the students identify how such factors of the communication setting as the participants, the setting, the topic, and the goal of the message influence the choice of behavior?

3. Implementation

   Does the ACTIVITY provide an opportunity for the students to implement the behaviors they have selected?

   Does the DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP provide the students with an opportunity and encourage them to implement their selected behaviors? (This is especially important if the activity did not require implementation, if all students did not have an opportunity to implement during the activity, or if some students selected not to implement. When possible and appropriate, each student should have some opportunity to implement his/her personally selected behaviors, either during the activity or during the "Discussion/Follow-up.")

4. Evaluation

   Does the ACTIVITY provide a sufficient basis for the students to make sound judgments about the effectiveness of their communication behavior? (The wider the range of behaviors revealed through the activity and the more opportunity the activity provides to implement and select, the stronger should be the basis for the students' evaluations.)

   Does the DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP provide the students with an opportunity to objectively evaluate their behavior, including the appropriateness of their criteria for selection and the effectiveness of their implementation?

The perspective implied by the foregoing questions suggests that the best activity is usually that which enables at least several, if not all, of the students to perform behaviors relevant to the objective of the activity. Performance requires selection and implementation. Without performance, the students will be unable to evaluate their own selection and implementation of behaviors.

However, this does not eliminate activities (e.g., modeling) in which the students merely observe others (via film, video-tape, reference to personal experiences, etc.). On the contrary, these kinds of activities can be very useful for expanding the students' understanding of criteria for selecting and implementing certain behaviors, especially behaviors which may be threatening to the student.

Regardless of the objective and nature of the activity, its value will be significantly limited if evaluation is not built in. While it is probable that the students will automatically make individual judgments about the appropriateness of their behavior and that of others, including their selection and implementation, it is unlikely that the quality of the judgments will be as high as when they are made collectively and with guidance. Of greater importance, without evaluation there is even potential for the activity to be detrimental. The real danger is the potential for their individual, unvocalized judgments to be incorrect or incomplete, judgments which may lead them to become less competent communicators.